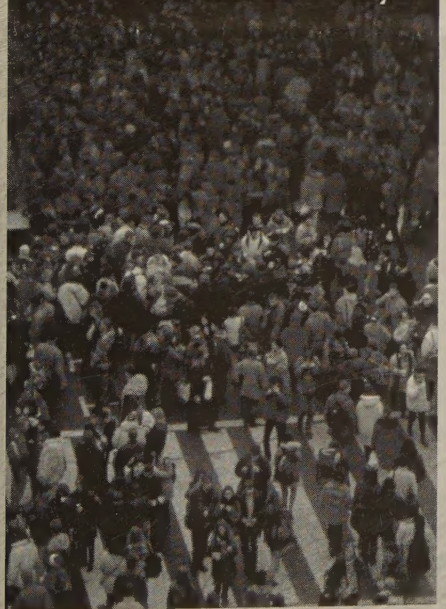
Letter from Taizé

October - November 2002 Bimonthly 0,50 euro 5

During the summer in Taizé, many participants reflected on practical steps to take in each country in order to begin a pilgrimage towards the meeting in Paris. Young adults will meet together, city by city, so that they can get to know one another better before leaving this winter for Paris, and to begin this pilgrimage in different ways.



PROCESSED
OCT 15 2002
GTU LIBRARY

THE SUMMER IN TAIZÉ

Keeping Peace

"Keeping peace" is perhaps one of the most precious realities that was lived out this past summer in Taizé: discovering that peace is possible, in a multicoloured crowd of several thousand young adults who came every week from up to eighty different countries, and discovering that praying together can be a simple way of welcoming peace in order to communicate it to others.

"Every time I come here, I have the impression that I discover in a concrete way what hope means. Taizé fills me with inner peace. Keeping peace is not easy when we return home; we have to work at it, not going back to our cities and simply remaining passive in the face of existence. Keeping peace could perhaps mean realizing that the simple fact of coming here is already a small commitment in the life of a young person, one that can lead to taking on responsibilities. I feel inner peace in Valencia, where I live, when I take responsibility for creating a better Church. Peace is found in creativity, in prayer, in action. In Taizé I discover the connection between all these things." These were the words of Raul, a medical student from Spain, summing up his experience of a few days spent on the hill in early July.

"Begin the work of peace within yourself so that, once you are at peace yourself, you can bring peace to others." One morning a week, a time of small-group sharing, following a Bible introduction, was based on these words of Saint Ambrose.

> "Peace
> is found
> in creativity."

Each week, several topics were offered for reflection along the lines of the letter Love and Say It With Your Life. A large map of Taizé was distributed to all those who arrived on Sunday, containing practical information and the different ways of spending the week. One possibility involved reflecting on Bible texts that showed how Jesus led his disciples to live in "faith and hope": How is it possible to believe today? How can

28 December 02 - 1 January 03
Paris Taizé
www.taize.fr

trust in God change our lives? Then there were two biblical topics: "How can I discover what God wants of me?" and "Encountering God in the Psalms". For the families, each morning a brother, a sister of Saint Andrew and some young people from other continents presented to the children and their parents a little puppet-show on the story of the prophet Elijah. Then, the children met in small groups like the young adults do, mixing nationalities, while the parents listened to a Bible introduction on the same theme as the puppet-show. The group for adults also used the story of Elijah as a basis for reflection during the week. In addition, each young person could choose to help for half a day with the work necessary for life on the hill.

"Peace is found in creativity." The challenge of welcoming so many people, 500 per week more than last year, and in particular many young people from central and eastern Europe, was a constant call to creativity throughout the summer. "Everything goes well in Taizé because those who come set to work with generosity. What astonishes me the most is the joy of working together, as if the simple fact of working for others – cooking, washing dishes, or putting up large tents – could make people happy," explained a young man from Gabon who was sent by his Church to help with the welcome during the summer.

Peace is created step by step

Each week, eight buses came from Romania, twice as many as last year, along with hundreds of Poles and Lithuanians. Several thousand Italians, Portuguese and Germans passed through Taizé during the summer. Peace is perhaps created step by step, discreetly, in relationships between individuals, tiny bridges of friendship across the map of Europe and of the world. It would take too much time to mention all the countries present, but the surprise visit of fifteen young priests from China was a moving moment that bore witness to the new vitality that characterizes the Church in that land.

There were beautiful moments when people whose history has involved mutual hostility met and began to talk together spontaneously: Japanese and Koreans, people from Timor and Indonesians, Serbs and Croats…

Japan and Korea have a painful history linked to the colonization of one by the other in a still recent past; political relations between the two countries are often ambiguous, sometimes even tense. The meetings between young Japanese and Koreans allowed them to get to know one another and to create friendships. For most Koreans, it was the first opportunity for them to take the time to speak with Japanese. A young Japanese woman said, "In my small group, there are Croats and Serbs, and it is not always easy because of their recent history. Listening to them, I thought straightaway about the relationship between Japanese and Koreans. I know how much suffering the Japanese inflicted on the Koreans in the course of history." In one meeting, the Koreans were asked to introduce themselves to the Japanese and vice versa, and everyone was touched and tried to do it as best they could.

At the end of July, a group of students from East Timor who were studying in Portugal spent a few days in Taizé. One afternoon, with some young people from Indonesia, they decided to make a common presentation of both their countries, which had been divided by a civil war. These young people that everything seems to separate were astonished themselves that they could sing together.

"'Keep peace, work for peace" was also the theme of groups led by two government experts in international relations and the building up of Europe. How can we realize that globalization, the end of the cold war, far from leading inevitably to a "clash of civilizations," carries with it the seeds of true understanding among nations, of course with obvious limits, but also holding out a new hope in the history of humankind? How can we begin to trust in all simplicity?

It was perhaps the meeting on Africa which took place every Thursday afternoon that offered some responses to the challenge of the contact between different cultures: dances, songs, sketches about daily life in Africa were presented by young Africans who had come to Taizé for the whole summer, sent by their local Church to bear witness to their commitment. "The hope of Africa," said the brother who introduced the meeting, "is that we can do a lot with very little, if we do it with the heart."

Life-commitment

On two occasions, the community of brothers shared festive events with the visitors. At the beginning of August, a young German brother made his life-commitment in the community, in celibacy, life together, and a great simplicity of life. And at the end of that month, a young man from the Dominican Republic entered the community.

Throughout the summer months, different Church leaders came to Taizé. Several Anglican bishops spent a week here, accompanying young people from Britain and South Africa. Cardinal Keeler from Baltimore arrived one afternoon by surprise. The bishop of Santander in Spain spent a few days in Taizé with young people from his diocese. The archbishop of Perth in Australia, the archbishop of Algiers, a Czech bishop and a bishop from Senegal were present as well. The bishop from India in charge of pastoral work with the young stayed a week, with a group of young people from his country. In addition to these Catholic bishops, the Lutheran bishop of Berlin, the president of the French Protestant Federation, and an Orthodox bishop from the USA visited the hill. Finally, the young people from Braga, in Portugal, found on the Friday before they left for Taizé that one place in the coach that would take them there was still empty. On a whim, they called their young bishop, Antonio Dias, to offer him the seat, and the bishop accepted spontaneously to join this pilgrimage, lasting more than twenty hours by bus, with the young people of his diocese.

Knowing how to leave

"The simple fact of coming here is already a small commitment in the life of a young person," said Raul: a small commitment that is not afraid of an adventure.

"Keeping peace is not easy when we return home; we have to work at it, not going back to our cities and simply remaining passive in the face of existence." In order to offer concrete paths to enable people to keep on going once they return home, more than thirty different workshops were offered each week. "How can we discover beauty in everyday life?" A brother offered a reflection on the work of four painters: Cezanne, Chardin, Manet and Morandi, followed by a practical exercise, for which drawing-paper and pastels were distributed to those who wanted to try and draw beauty. The idea also arose of having workshops linked to career choices: "Meeting for social workers and volunteers involved in social work"; "Meeting for teachers and those preparing to teach: What values can we transmit? How to keep going?"; "Take your bed and walk: meeting for those who work in the health field"; "How to listen?"

Towards the meeting in Paris

During the summer in Taizé, many participants reflected on practical steps to take in each country in order to begin a pilgrimage towards the meeting in Paris, whether from Scandinavia or the Mediterranean countries, from the east, the center or the west of Europe, or even from other continents.

To provide an image of these steps, which witness to the imagination of the young, the example of the Poles can be mentioned. Every Friday afternoon, those from Poland interested in the European meeting were invited to take tea together to share their ideas about the preparation for this meeting in the different regions of Poland.

As the weeks passed, the plan matured to propose a small pilgrimage of trust in every preparation point throughout the country. From September on, interested young adults will meet together, city by city, so that they can get to know one another better before leaving this winter for Paris, and to begin this pilgrimage in different ways.

In October and November, they will meet once a month to reflect together on what it means to set out on a spiritual journey. The reflection will be based on three themes: "The creativity of charity," "Under the blessing of hospitality," "A joy to share."

Beginning in December, they will meet each week to spend time getting to know one another better. The first week, each person will bring some photos of the place from which they come and the place where they live. The second week, they will bring a gift for the family with whom they will stay in Paris and they will explain why they chose that gift. The Advent season is celebrated in Poland as a time of sharing with those who do not necessarily belong to the family; people share *oplatek*, small cakes made without yeast, and each guest receives a piece as a sign of communion. The third week, the young people will go to share the *oplatek* with those who cannot come to Paris – elderly persons in retirement homes, children in hospital, etc.

Being creators of unity

On the other side of Europe, those from the region of Paris are already beginning to prepare the practical details of the welcome for the end of December. David from Trappes, a town about thirty kilometres from the center of Paris, explains, "We have a small team of young people ready to look for host families for all who will visit us. The idea is of course to begin with those already involved in the life of the parish, but also to find people who have very little contact with the Church and who will perhaps be happy to take part in their own way. We have already made contact with the Young Muslim Association as well as the association of Jewish families. Our district is known for social problems linked to immigration. I hope the meeting will be a clear invitation to create links between the different communities."

Outside the Paris region, the meeting is also stimulating practical initiatives. Many French people who do not live near Paris are eager to help with the welcome. They will come two days earlier to support the welcome teams in the parishes or to assist with the organization of the meals, the prayers, and with cleaning and transportation. In almost every region of France, contact persons are coordinating the registrations and preparing coaches for the journey. For some, it is a call to take small but real responsibilities.

Axel will help with the preparation for the coaches that come to Paris from Nice, in the South of France. "I have taken part in three European meetings," he said. "You never leave the same way you arrived. When you come home, you look at your neighborhood, your family, and your studies differently. You try to get to know others more. In the routine of everyday life, you close yourself in a cocoon. When you return from these meetings, you want to know what other people think. When the mass media depicts young people, they often speak about insecurity. The European meeting can show that the young are not only a factor of insecurity, but also creators of unity."

This meeting is an attempt to call all those who will set out, from throughout Europe, to come to discover the Church in France, to become creators of unity. To keep peace, to work for peace, and to entrust it like a fragile and precious vase to those who will welcome us in Paris.

Practical Details

Arrival: Saturday morning, 28th December 2002 between 7am and 12 noon.
Departure: Wednesday afternoon (after 4 pm), 1st Jan. 2003
Accommodation: either with families or in school and church halls. It is essential to bring a camping mat and sleeping-bag.
General programme for 17-29 year olds: Participants will be welcomed by families and local church communities throughout the Paris region. There will be morning prayer each day in the neighbourhood where you are staying. Then meetings in small groups with other participants and with local people. Each day — midday and evening — there will be two common prayers in large halls for all participants of the meeting together. In the afternoon: workshops on various themes. There is also the possibility to spend the five days of the meeting in silence (separate accommodation).
Helpers/Choir (option open only to young adults between the ages of 17 and 29): Those who would like to help organise the meetings in the neighbourhoods, to be team-leaders for practical tasks or to be in the choir group, should arrive if possible on Thursday 26th December, between 8am and 3pm (arrival not possible on 27th December). Some places in these teams will also be open to participants who arrive on 28th December.
16 year olds may come to the meeting only if accompanied by an adult over 20, with each adult accompanying no more than two 16 year olds. Arrival: 28th December — not before.
Adults over 30: the meeting is intended for young adults under 30. However a few adults over this age can also come, in particular if they are leading a group of young people. We ask older adults (over 40) to consider sponsoring a young person to come from a church, chaplaincy or school in their area, instead of coming themselves. Adults over 30 all participate in the main group, arriving on 28th December (not before). If you cannot accept the same simple accommodation conditions as the young people and need a "real bed" please indicate this when you register.
Families with children (mininum age: 7 years), and people with a disability who need special accommodation should contact Taizé — best by telephone in October or November — to arrange this.
Your Contribution to costs is made on arrival. Young people from Ireland and Britain will be asked to contribute approx. 70 euro for the whole meeting (the exact amount will be known in November.). As well as the hire of meeting-halls and equipment, this covers all meals and a public transport pass. Adults leading groups of young people can contribute the same amount, other adults over 30 are asked to contribute the double.
Register by 1st December.
Information
"Meetings", Taizé Community,
71250 TAIZÉ, France, www.taize.fr
email: meetings@taize.fr
Tel:(+33) 385.50.30.02 (10.00-12.00 Mon-Sat & 17.00-19.00 Mon-Fri, European time; at other times, if urgent: (+33) 385.50.30.30); Fax: (+33) 385.50.30.16

THE WILL OF GOD

What does the Bible mean by "the will of God"?

The Scriptures use the expression "the will of God" with two different nuances. Most of the time, for example in the Psalms, it simply means "what is pleasing to God, what God wants," or we could almost say "what makes God happy." In Psalm 143,10, for example, we read, "Teach me to do your will, for you are my God." The author of the psalm, having realized all that God had done for him, wants to respond to this love by doing what is pleasing to God. If we love someone, we naturally try to do what that person likes, to act in a way that makes them happy.

But we can also invert the image. If God loves us, his happiness is for us to discover the fullness of life. And this leads us to the second meaning of the expression "the will of God." It sometimes refers to God's great plan or designs for all creation (cf. Eph 1:9-10), to the divine intention behind the existence of the universe as well as of each one of us.

Speaking of God's plan is a way of saying that existence has a meaning and a direction. The existence of the world and the life of human beings is not just a fact, something given. In the eyes of believers, this fact witnesses to an underlying intention on God's part: God created us for a reason. The letter to the Ephesians expresses this by saying that "God chose us in Christ before the creation of the world" (Eph 1:4). The word "before" does not express something that is previous in time, but rather a priority in God's intention. Christ's coming and the call to follow him are not a kind of afterthought in God's mind, a stopgap measure conditioned by human wrongdoing; they were already included in the original will of God which led to the creation of the universe.

On the other hand, the image of a divine plan would lead us astray if we understood it as a kind of book where everything was written down ahead of time, so that all we had to do was to follow blindly. Such a vision of things would eliminate our freedom and paralyze us: how could we figure out what was written in that "book" and be sure we were not making a mistake?

Instead of seeing it as a reality already fully worked out ahead of time, the Bible approaches God's plan through the notion of promise. When the God of the Bible enters into the life of human beings, he almost always opens up before them an unexpected future. He situates their life in a much wider context. At the very beginning of Bible history, for example, God says to Abraham, "I will make of you a great people, I will bless you.... Through you all the families on earth will be blessed" (Gen 12:2). Far from being a prison to limit or take away our freedom, God's will is a promise of life. It calls us to make use of all our gifts so that the way we live may correspond more and more closely to God's love for us.

What is the relationship between God's will and our desires?

Believers have often considered desire as something negative or at least suspicious, as an obstacle to the discovery of God's will for us. For the Bible, however, the desire for greater life characterizes us as human beings: in Hebrew the word soul (*nefesh*, literally "the throat") refers to humans as beings of desire. If we were to make a clear separation between our desires and our relationship with God, it would be impossible for us to discern what God wants for us. And how then would we live the first commandment: "You will love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength" (Deut 6:5; cf. Mark 12:30)? We would be beings who are divided.

On the other hand, it is obvious that simply identifying our desires and God's will is just as mistaken. If we are honest with ourselves, we know that there are sometimes desires in us which, if we fulfilled them, would hurt others or ourselves; these clearly cannot come from God. The way forward lies neither in separating or identifying our desires and God's will, but in progressively deepening our desires in the light of faith.

The Word of God which we find in the Bible, and especially the life of Christ Jesus, Word made flesh (John 1:14), offer us the touchstone that enables us to verify the authenticity of our desires. First of all, do we believe in a God who loves us and who wants to offer us true happiness in a communion with him? Are we ready to "choose life" (cf. Deut 30:19)? Second, are our personal aspirations compatible with a life for God, a life in the steps of Christ? By this confrontation with God's self-revelation, our desires indicate a road that we are invited to follow.

On this road we will discover, perhaps with surprise, that in the process our desires change. The truth is that we do not know what we really want. The obstacle to fulfilling God's will is not human desire in itself. The obstacle is the resolution to cling at all costs to what we imagine we want, instead of letting our desire be deepened under the impact of events and inspirations that come from God.

In the Gospel according to John, Jesus says, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws that person" (John 6:44). The word translated by "draw" is a verb used among other things for ships in the harbour which need to be towed out into the deep water in order to be carried forward by the current. If we apply this image to ourselves, we can consider our deepest desire as the inner presence of God who draws us to Christ, who sets us in the current of God's great plan to give us life in fullness. Far from being something that belongs to us, our desire goes beyond us; it is in communication with the immensity of God, with God's will for us. When, instead of attempting to be the master of our desires or to follow them blindly, we deepen them by surrendering to the One who calls us, our aspiration brings us out of ourselves and leads us towards Another. We then discover that we have been created for a life beyond all our dreams, something more than we could ever hope for.

NOVEMBER

God of all comfort, you take all our burdens upon yourself, so that we can go forward constantly from worry towards trusting, from the shadows towards the light.

1 Fri — Mt 5:1-12
ALL SAINTS
Jesus said: Happy are the clear in heart, for they shall see God.

2 Sat — Lk 11:9-13
Jesus said: Ask, and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you.

3 SUN — Mt 23:1-12
Jesus said: The greatest among you will be your servant.

4 Mon — Si 14:1-6,14-16
Happy are those who are not in anguish over their failings. For if a person is hard upon themselves, to whom will they be kind?

5 Tue — Rv 3:20-22
The Risen Christ says: I stand at the door, knocking. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with them, and they with me.

6 Wed — Mt 9:36—10:8
Jesus sent out his twelve disciples, saying: Proclaim that the kingdom of heaven is close at hand. Freely you have received, freely give.

7 Thu — Rm 8:1-11
The One who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit living in you.

8 Fri — Jn 12:23-26
Jesus said: Anyone who is too attached to their own life will lose it, while anyone who is not attached to their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

9 Sat — 2 P 1:19-21
You do well to pay attention to the word of the prophets, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

10 SUN — Ws 6:12-16
The wisdom of God is readily seen by those who love her. Those who seek her will find.

11 Mon — Mt 18:1-5
Jesus said: Whoever makes themselves humble like a child is greatest in the kingdom of Heaven. Anyone who welcomes a little child in my name welcomes me.

12 Tue — Ep 4:1-6
Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one Body and one Spirit, just as you have all been called to one hope.

13 Wed — Lk 12:13-21
Jesus said: Be on your guard against every kind of greed; for a person's life does not consist in the abundance of their possessions.

14 Thu — 1 S 16:1-13
The Lord said to Samuel: Take no notice of appearance. God does not see as human beings see: they look at appearances but God looks at the heart.

15 Fri — Mt 13:31-33
Jesus said: The kingdom of heaven is like the yeast a woman took and mixed in with a large amount of flour until the whole thing rose.

16 Sat — Lk 12:22-31
Jesus said: Do not be anxious about your life. Can any of you, by worrying about it, add a single moment to the length of your life?

17 SUN — Mt 25:14-30
In a parable, the master said to his faithful servant, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful with a little, I will entrust you with much more. Come and share your master's happiness!"

18 Mon — Dt 32:8-11
God finds his people in the desert, in a barren wasteland. God shields them and cares for them, guarding them as the apple of his eye.

19 Tue — 2 Co 3:16-18
Paul writes: All of us, with our unveiled faces like mirrors reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the image that we reflect in brighter and brighter glory.

20 Wed — Rm 12:3-13
Be joyful in your hope, steadfast in hardship, faithful in prayer. Be always ready to offer hospitality.

21 Thu — Jn 15:9-17
Jesus said to his disciples: You did not choose me. No, I chose you.

22 Fri — Lk 12:49-53
Jesus said: I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already burning!

23 Sat — Mk 4:26-29
Jesus said: The kingdom of God is like this: A person scatters seed on the land. Night and day the seed sprouts and grows, they know not how.

24 SUN — Mt 25:31-40
Jesus said: In truth I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.

25 Mon — Lk 6:27-35
Jesus said: Treat others as you would like them to treat you.

26 Tue — Jn 12:35-36
Jesus said to his disciples: Believe in the light so that you may become children of light.

27 Wed — Mk 1:16-20
Jesus said to his first disciples, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of people."

28 Thu — Si 2:1-11
If you want to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for trials. Be sincere of heart and steadfast. Do not be alarmed by adversity, but attach yourself to the Lord and do not leave him.

29 Fri — Ac 20:17-38
Paul said: Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, who said, "There is more happiness in giving than in receiving."

30 Sat — Rm 10:11-13
St ANDREW
Paul writes: There is no difference between persons: all have the same Lord, who generously blesses all who call on him.

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

MEDITATING ON THE WORD

DECEMBER

1 Co 1:4-9
1 SUN ADVENT God is faithful and has called you to live in communion with his Son, Jesus Christ.

Ga 5:13-14
2 Mon You were called to be free. Do not use your freedom for self-indulgence but to serve one another in love.

Lk 12:32-48
3 Tue Jesus said: Be like people waiting for their master to return, ready to open the door as soon as he comes and knocks.

Heb 2:5-18
4 Wed Because Christ himself suffered when he was put to the test, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

1 Jn 4:7-11
5 Thu Let us love one another, for love is of God and whoever loves is born of God and knows God.

Ps 84
6 Fri Happy are those who find their strength in you, Lord. As they pass through the valley of tears they make it a place of living springs.

Rv 2:8-11
7 Sat The Lord says: I know your trials and your poverty, yet you are rich: do not fear suffering, stay faithful until death and I will give you the crown of life.

Mk 1:1-8
8 SUN Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

Ps 105:1-5
9 Mon Seek God and his strength, seek God's face at all times. Remember the wonders God has done.

1 Jn 4:16-21
10 Tue God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.

Lk 14:27-33
11 Wed Jesus said: Whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

Rm 12:14-18,21
12 Thu Do not repay evil with evil. Seek to do what is regarded as good by all. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Ps 23
13 Fri You guide me, Lord, on paths of righteousness. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for you are with me.

Mt 1:18-23
14 Sat The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Emmanuel, a name which means "God-with-us".

Jn 1:19-27
15 SUN John said: I baptise with water; but standing among you — unknown to you — is the one who is coming after me.

Jr 14:8-9
16 Mon You are our hope, O God. You are among us and we are called by your name.

Ph 2:1-11
17 Tue St. Paul writes: Be of the same mind, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing from selfish ambition. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus himself.

2 Co 9:6-11
18 Wed Paul writes: Anyone who sows generously will also reap generously. God loves the one who gives joyfully.

Am 5:4,24
19 Thu God says: Seek me and you shall live. Let justice flow like water, and righteousness like an unfailing stream.

Ps 103
20 Fri Bless the Lord, my soul; let all that is in me bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, my soul; forget none of his good deeds.

1 Tm 6:11-16
21 Sat Paul writes to Timothy: Fight the good fight of faith and win the eternal life to which you were called.

Lk 1:26-38
22 SUN The angel said to Mary: Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.

Is 42:1-4
23 Mon The Lord says: My servant does not cry out or raise his voice. Faithfully he will present what is just; he will not falter or be discouraged until he has established justice on the earth.

Is 41:8-10
24 Tue The Lord says to his people: You are my servant, I have chosen you and will not cast you off. Fear not, for I am with you.

Jn 1:1-18
25 Wed CHRISTMAS The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

Pr 4:23
26 Thu St STEPHEN Above all else, watch over your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.

Col 3:12-17
27 Fri St JOHN Bear with one another and forgive whatever grievances you have against one another. The Lord has forgiven you, do the same in your turn.

2 Tm 1:6-18
28 Sat Paul writes to Timothy: I remind you now to fan into a flame the gift God has placed in you. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of inward strength, of love and of self-control.

Heb 11:8-16
29 SUN By faith, Abraham answered God's call and set out for the land he was to inherit. And he set out without knowing where he was going.

2 Co 4:7-12
30 Mon We carry the treasure of God's glory in earthen vessels so that it may be quite clear that the radiance comes from God, not from us.

Mk 1:1-15
31 Tue Jesus said: The kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent and believe the good news of the Gospel.

Christ Jesus, in days of darkness as well as in those bathed in light, you knock at our door and you wait for our response.

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

MEDITATING ON THE WORD

JOHANNINE HOURS

November: Matthew 28:1-8

According to the Gospel accounts, the first ones to receive the message of the resurrection were the women who went to the tomb early in the morning, bringing ointments to accomplish the funeral rites. They were still bewildered by the passion and death of Jesus. They were upset and worried: "Who will roll away the stone for us?" The discovery of the empty tomb increased their confusion: "Where is he?"

Beyond their perplexity, however, something new is beginning to dawn. The empty tomb, like the message of the angels they meet, or like Christ when he appears to Mary of Magdala, ask them the same question: What are you looking for? What is the deepest longing within you?

If you are looking for the crucified Jesus, then know that he succeeded in making his entire life a gift for those he loved, and death could not hold on to anything! If you want to walk in his steps, do not stay in front of the empty tomb; you must go towards the living! You need to set out on the road and keep looking for him; he goes before you in the daily life of people. He is waiting for you in Galilee, at the crossroads of peoples and nations.

More deeply than all our doubts, contradictions and limits, Christ comes to open for all time in each of us this question: Why do you want to live? If we were able to let our hearts respond, there would be nothing but an outpouring of amazed gratitude, as was the case for Mary ("Rabbouni!") or Thomas ("My Lord and my God!").

- How can I recognize my true longing amidst the confusion of my fears and my dreams?
- Where does Christ invite me to keep on searching?

December: Psalm 103

The three central verses of this psalm (11,12,13) celebrate God's love intensely. Three images evoke God's inexhaustible efficacy and sensitivity. This confession, born of a personal experience, develops in two directions that come to a climax in the invitations that open and close the prayer: "Bless the Lord, my soul!" "Bless the Lord, all his works!"

Thankfulness for God's intervention leads to knowledge of God's will and ways of acting, both in the life of individuals and in the history of the nation (verses 3-10). It leads believers to desire that love more and more, so that it can animate their entire being.

In addition, the assurance of God's unlimited kindness enables believers to take off all their masks and recognize that they are poor and vulnerable (verses 14-18), but at the same time free and called to an intimate collaboration with God. They can then look at others as God does: rooted in God's own life, they are unable to harbour anger for ever or return evil for evil. Their relationships with others will change. Worshippers discover a responsibility for drawing all creation along with them and reawakening in each person the desire to welcome God's love, in order to praise him always.

- How did Jesus live out God's love celebrated in this psalm?
- What in me does not yet participate in this blessing?
- How, today, can we invite the world that does not know God to bless God?

Johannine hours are meant as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer in the midst of our daily life. During the course of a day, take an hour or so to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, a group of 3 to 10 people can meet to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.

India

Fifteen Years of Meetings

Many things have developed out of the two major pilgrimage of trust meetings in Madras fifteen years ago. As the Youth Commission of the Bishops' Conference stated, "The significant event of 1985 was the International Meeting held by the Taizé Brothers at Madras in collaboration with the CBCI. It was the first time in the history of the Church in India that so many young people were gathered together."

And in 1988, a newspaper article noted, "In the grounds of Loyola College, a mini-world of solidarity was formed. As someone remarked, 'a microcosm built in love', for it was a gathering of people from all walks of life. They came not as tourists but in pursuit of peace and reconciliation and to strive to strengthen human solidarity and build trust among people."

From 1987 onwards, groups of youth from India have been coming to Taizé regularly. Sent by their Churches, they take part in a three-month programme involving youth from Asia, Africa, and North and South America.

They come from the Catholic Church, from the Church of North India, the Church of South India, Marthoma, and the Syrian Orthodox Churches, as well as from different organisations like AICUF, YCS, Jesus Youth, and so on. In Taizé, they meet together with youth from the other Asian countries and from Africa and South and North America, as well as from Europe. They share the things that concern them at home, be it caste, communalism, or ethnic differences, be it preoccupation for their future in a rapidly evolving society, with the others from completely different economic and social situations.

Brothers of the community travel regularly to India to visit the young people. This year two brothers were present in May:

Andhra Pradesh

We travelled through a large part of India for a series of meetings for young adults in Andhra Pradesh. In the South-East, we often had to travel by night in order to be in a different place each day. These night journeys also allowed us to escape the hottest parts of the day. While we were there, a heat wave crossed this region of India and there were many victims in Andhra. Yet the 46°C temperature in no way stopped the people from coming to take part in the prayers, even in the places where the ventilation was minimal and there was no electricity to permit the use of fans. The programme that had been prepared for us was very diverse, with many visits, prayers and meetings.

One evening we went to Vuyyuru – a small village that for us was like a beacon of hope. As yet there is no chapel, but the church community is already very alive. Each day, one of the priests gathers the village people together to read from the Bible and to share something based on the text that has been read. Every day, the young and the less young come together to pray the rosary. In place of a chapel, they use a room – long and narrow, with a low ceiling and a few tiny windows – that normally serves as a sewing workshop. This is where we had evening prayer. The heat was intense and the windows quite insufficient to ventilate the room. With some candles arranged on the ground, a small icon of the Cross and an open Bible, we began the prayer. The room was full of children, young people and elderly people. The songs were sung in Hindi, English and the local language Telugu, and it was if everybody had known them since childhood. After the Gospel came a moment of silence, intensely felt by everyone, and then at the end came the prayer around the Cross. We were deeply impressed to see how the prayer around the Cross – originally inspired by Christians in Russia – could have such an impact on believers in this far-off village in rural India. Children, young people, mothers with their babies came to entrust themselves to the Christ who en-

trusted himself to the Father. Afterwards, one of the priests announced that from now on, each Sunday they would meet for the prayer around the Cross, with meditative singing.

Another outstanding meeting was one held in a school a few kilometres from the state capital, Hyderabad. Responding to an invitation from the youth chaplain, the young people's expectations were high and varied for the four-day event. Hyderabad is one of the major cities of India and one of the big questions people asked was how to keep their faith alive in a place where the pace of life gets faster and faster and people feel themselves being pulled in different directions. Some of them were looking for silence in order to renew their closeness with Christ. Others needed to step back a bit from their lives in order to see what was happening. Others again wanted to pray or make a retreat. Some had come because they knew the songs from Taizé or else wanted contact with the community. Still others came because their friends were coming and had invited them to come along. The meeting was very simple in style: two times of prayer together each day, and Mass; singing, silence, practical jobs to do in groups, Bible introductions and sharing groups, all in a friendly atmosphere of dialogue and listening to one another.

Orissa

It was dark when we arrived in Amlikhaman. The journey had lasted longer than we thought and the sun disappeared among the trees the further we went into the jungle. At last the driver announced that we were getting near, although it was hard to realize. But yes, we come to a halt and in the darkness we can make out people surrounding the car. We hear the sound of tablas and they invite us to alight. In fact, we have arrived right in the middle of the daily power-cut!

We are still at the gate, and they make us sit down. According to the beautiful Adivasi custom, young people come to wash our feet, one with water and a basin, the other with a towel. Then the singing starts. We set off on foot and it is only then that we realize – as the voices fill the night air – that there are a lot of people. Five hundred have arrived during the day. They are from the five dioceses of Orissa and they have travelled for hours, some even for a whole day, because communications are not good and buses are not frequent. Yet the long journey in the May heat does not seem to have dimmed their enthusiasm. According to their custom, they surround the guests, coming forward as they dance the traditional dances. One young woman carries a jar on her head and, in the most natural way possible, she sprinkles the young people as they pass, as a sign of blessing.

After this, everything seemed to flow of its own accord. Perhaps this was because our hosts were giving themselves in such a remarkable way. In fact, before making the decision to have this meeting, the youth chaplain for Sambalpur Diocese had visited the parish community at Amlikhaman several times. The people wondered why he wanted to choose a place that was so far away, with so little comfort. There was just enough water for cooking; you would have to go to the river to wash and it was a twenty-minute walk to get there! The girls would be housed in a little hostel and the boys in classrooms. But gradually, through Father Philip's explanations, the people came to understand that the very simplicity of the place and the style of welcome they could offer were in fact a guarantee of the sheer strength of the meeting. The witness of community life in Amlikhaman would inspire people to grasp something of the Church as the community of communities.

And so it was decided that each family in turn would take charge of the cooking, and each young person would bring enough rice and dal for the four days of the meeting. The mothers and fathers stayed over during their turn of duty and one of the two young parish priests was with them all the time. The other priest took care of everything, responding to all emergencies. They were the first up in the morning and the last to go to bed in the evening, when they were certain that all was well. In fact, they had guaranteed the local police that with the parents and several animators, they were taking entire responsibility for the safety of the young people. It is true that over the last few years it has become important to watch over this aspect of things...

The first morning, there was a moment's hesitation at the start of the sharing groups. The young people felt insecure because they have no experience of expressing themselves personally. Then, when they were invited to use other ways of expression than words – drawing, mime, drama –, the moment was over and tongues were loosened, and fingers and imaginations too.

As on so many occasions, the prayer around the Cross marked an important stage in the development of the meeting. But the strongest moment came during the celebration of light. After a litany of intercession, everyone came out of the church and began a long procession around he compound. Five hundred young people moving slowly to the singing of bajans, then gathering around a small chapel for the Gospel reading: "You are the salt of the earth and you are the light of the world."

Paris contact for Ireland:

Revd. Jerry Carey
St.Joseph's Presbytery
52 Kincora Park
Ennis
Co. Clare.
Telephone: 00 353 65 68 22 166
Mobile: 00 353 86 250 8444

Taizé - Pilgrimage of Trust
Canada 2003

Vancouver
St. Mark's College, University of British Columbia
January 31-February 2
Contact UBC Chaplains: Seiichi Ariga at uccm@interchange.ubc.ca or 604-224-3722
Jim O'Neill at frjimo@idmail.com or 604-822-4463

Toronto
St. Paul's Basilica
February 7-9
Contact Madeleine Bonnard at madeleine.bonnard@sympatico.ca or 416-462-2534

Montreal
Relais Mont-Royal
February 14-16
Contact Mario Bard at mario@relaismontroyal.com or 514-528-7033

For details, visit the Taizé web site at www.taize.fr
Follow the links to Americas and Canada under Pilgrimage of Trust

Letter from Taizé

Annual subscription
Ordinary subscription: 6 Euros (France 4,5 Euros)
Supporting subscription: 10 or 20 Euros

Means of payment:

- by **credit card** *Visa, Mastercard, Eurocard, Carte Bleue*: send the number of your card and dates of validity to Taizé, and say what sum in Euros you wish to transfer.
- by **international Giro transfer** in Euros addressed to: Lettre de Taizé, CCP 20041-01007 -0061446M038-71 or CCP LYON 614 46 M.
- by **cheque** in Euros to Lettre de Taizé, F-71250 Taizé Communauté, made payable through Société Générale.

In certain countries it is possible to pay **within the country**:

Australia: $12 - Letter from Taizé, P.O. Box 769, North Sydney, NSW 2059
Canada: $10 (CIBC 010 04922 04 17130), Letter from Taizé c/o Lesley Santiago, 6643 Montevideo Road, Mississauga, Ontario L5N 4E8.
Ireland: (Current Account N° 80985128) Letter from Taizé, c/o Stephanie Kiely, 19 Cherbury Park Road, Lucan, Co.Dublin
New Zealand: $15 - c/o Jenny Chisholm, 13 Arden Way, Wilton, Wellington.
UK: £4.50 - Letter from Taizé, c/o Nick and Jane SHIELDS, 42 Blenheim Road, St Johns, WAKEFIELD, W. Yorkshire WF1 3JZ.
USA: $7 - Letter from Taizé, 132 Wagon Road, Roslyn Heights, NY 11577.
For Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary, India, Italy, Korea, Netherlands, Norway, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden, write to Taizé to ask for the address in your country.

Correspondence:
Letter from Taizé, 71250 Taizé-Communauté, France
e-mail: letter@taize.fr www.taize.fr
News from Taizé by email twice a month free of charge: www.taize.fr/taizenews.htm

Lettre 226 – DRA V. Rogeaux – Com. par. 0105K79608 – DL 970
Ateliers et Presses de Taizé